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Matthew 28:1-10
Acts 10:34-43
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
Colossians 3:1-4

April 5, 2026
Easter Sunday

We're going back to the frickin' moon!

These very profound words were spoken by an enthusiastic young boy when asked on Wednesday why he wanted to witness the launch of Artemis II.

And I have to admit, I have been just as excited. Watching the launch of the first manned spacecraft to travel to the moon in over 50 years, brought tears to my eyes. I held my breath knowing that this moment wasn't just about a mission to space. It was about the greater story of humanity and who we are together.

Some of you will recall Apollo 8, the first mission to orbit the moon in 1968. On Christmas Eve of that year, three astronauts, Bill Anders, Jim Lovell, and Frank Borman completed their 9th orbit around the moon. And as they had earth in view they broadcast a message to the world.

Taking turns, they read the creation story from Genesis. In the beginning God created heaven and earth. You know the story. But the words that continue to move me from their reading were these...

And God said let there be light and there was light and God said it was good.

The astronauts ended their broadcast by saying...

God bless all of you, all of you on the good Earth.

And now, the crew of Artemis II will have that same unique opportunity...to see earth, the good earth, from a vantage point few of us will ever experience.

But there's something else that makes their journey incredibly unique. Before they emerge from the backside of the moon they will be cut off from communication with the earth. Out of satellite reach, they will spend approximately 40 minutes on Monday totally and utterly alone.

Before they see the light of the good earth shining in front of them, they will have to spend time in the absence of all that is familiar. They can't turn around and go back the way they came even if they start to feel afraid. They can only move forward, pulled by the gravity of the moon, as they forge a new path toward the future.

Can you imagine that moment when connection is restored? With the darkness behind you, light shining forth ahead of you. A new path comes into view. And you feel joy rising up within your soul.

The journey of the Artemis crew reminds me of Easter morning.

When we've spent time in darkness, in the absence of light. When all that we have loved and counted on has faded into the background. When what we have relied upon is simply not there. Our savior has died and we have been suspended in time...unable to go back but uncertain of how to go forward.

And then, in that moment, the stone is rolled away. We round the corner and we see light once again. Good light. And it is beautiful.

Christ has risen.

Easter morning reminds us of the love that God has for this world. The love that was described to us in Genesis. The love that was given to us through Jesus...*For God so loved the world that he gave his only son.*

God gives to this world because this world is good. And God keeps affirming that goodness over and over and over again.

And Easter stands for us as the greatest of gifts, the greatest of hopes. The reminder that there is nothing that can separate us from God's love. No hardness of heart. No shame. No guilt. No anger. No fear.

Yes...we may be pulled into darkness at times, feeling as though we have lost hope, afraid we can't find our way home as a person, as a family, as a nation, as a world. Division and conflict, regret and uncertainty can feel that way. And they can grow and take over our hearts if we don't keep moving forward...looking for the light that is emerging right in front of us. That's what sin does...it holds us back and convinces us that we don't have the power to overcome our darkness.

But Christ shines a light on you and on me. A light that says sin will not have the last word. A light that pushes out the darkness and guides us forward, to a new life...on this good earth together.

Christ's death shows us what darkness feels like. And Christ's resurrection shows us what love looks like.

It's the story of humanity and who we are together. Because the light of Christ changes us.

And when it changes us, when the forgiveness and redemption and reconciliation of Christ overflow into our lives, we can do no less than offer that same forgiveness and redemption and reconciliation to others.

The world is good when we are good, together. Christ redeems not just one of us. Christ redeems all of us.

And one thing is for certain, living the Easter story is a process for us all. We round the corner, we emerge out of darkness and see this incredible light. But like those astronauts turning for home, it will be a journey to fully comprehend what Jesus' love for us will mean. It will be a journey to learn how to live into that love especially in the divided world we find ourselves in right now.

But there is surely no turning back. Instead, Easter calls us forward with courage to love beyond boundaries. With strength to build across divides. And with conviction to be changed by the light that Christ has given us.

The realization of God's good earth is in our hands. It is the salvation of Christ given for you and for all of us to live in freedom and wholeness and abundance.

One earth. One people. One creation. And God said it is good.